

Message Text

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54

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 IO-12 RSR-01 /123 W
----- 019525

R 091737 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0386

INFO AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 04179

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, RH

SUBJECT: RHODESIAN DEVELOPMENTS

1. EMBOFF SAW FCO RHODESIAN DESK OFFICER MCCONVILLE EVENING APRIL 6 AND ASKED ABOUT PRESS REPORTS OF IAN SMITH'S DECLARATION IN RHODESIAN PARLIAMENT PREVIOUS DAY THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARED TO MAKE NEW EFFORT TO ACHIEVE AGREEMENT WITH BRITAIN BASED ON 1971 CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS. MCCONVILLE SAID THAT THE NEWS OF SMITH'S STATEMENT CAME LIKE A BOLT OUT OF THE BLUE TO HMG. THERE HAD BEEN NO ADVANCE WARNING OF ANY SORT THROUGH PRIVATE CHANNELS AND IN FACT AT THAT POINT THE BRITISH HAD NOT EVEN RECEIVED THE FULL TEXT OF SMITH'S REMARKS. HE SAID HE IMAGINED THAT BISHOP MUZOREWA WAS AS MYSTIFIED AS THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. MCCONVILLE DOWNPLAYED THE POSSIBILITY THAT SMITH'S MOVE REPRESENTED A SERIOUS ATTEMPT TO GET ANGLO- RHODESIAN RELATIONS OFF DEAD CENTER AND SPECULATED THAT HIS MOTIVE IN REVIVING THE 1971 PROPOSALS WAS RELATED TO INTERNAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

2. COMMENT: FCO IS NOT NORMALLY VERY FORTHCOMING ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE QUEST FOR A RHODESIAN SETTLEMENT. IN THIS INSTANCE, HOWEVER, THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO
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BELIEVE THAT THERE WAS MUCH MORE TO THE STORY THAN WHAT MCCONVILLE WAS WILLING TO TELL. IF SMITH WAS SERIOUS ABOUT MAKING A GESTURE WHICH MIGHT ENCOURAGE THE BRITISH, HIS TIMING COULDN' T HAVE BEEN WORSE. THE NEWS OF THE SENTENCING OF RHODESIAN JOURNALIST PETER NIESEWAND TO TWO YEARS HARD LABOR FOR UNSPECIFIED CRIMES AGAINST THE SECURITY OF THE STATE HAD JUST BROKEN. NIESEWAND HAD REPRESENTED BOTH THE BBC AND THE " GUARDIAN" IN SALISBURY. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS SENTENCE BROUGHT FORTH UNPRECEDENTED CONDEMNATION FROM ALL SEGMENTS OF BRITISH OPINION AND PROVOKED A STRONG OFFICIAL PROTEST FROM THE FOREIGN SECRETARY. UNLESS THE NIESEWAND SENTENCE IS STRUCK DOWN BY THE RHODESIAN COURT OF APPEALS, ONE MORE OBSTACLE WILL HAVE BEEN PLACED IN THE PATH OF A NEAR TERM NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF RHODESIA' S STATUS.

SOHM

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LONDON04179
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730437/aaaahyfr.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02-Aug-2001 by reddocgw>; APPROVED <31-Jan-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971212
Subject: RHODESIAN DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: PFOR, RH, n/a
To: AF
CAPE TOWN
LUSAKA
PRETORIA
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

